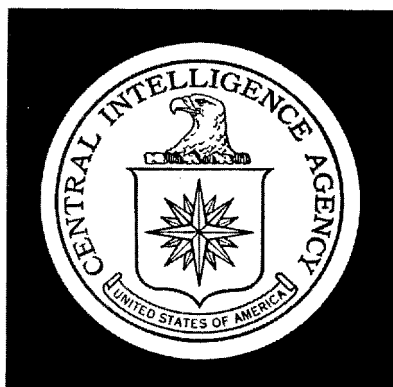


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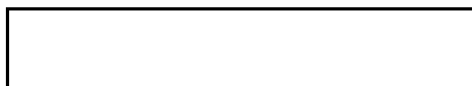
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Situation in South Vietnam: [Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu are both eager to become the military-backed candidate for the presidency despite their apparent lack of enthusiasm in public.]

[redacted] the two leaders will try to reach agreement on which man will become the candidate. If they privately come to terms, their decision will be put to the military members of the Directorate for approval before a public announcement is made. If the two fail to agree, the military Directorate members, and possibly the Congress of the Armed Forces, will make the choice. [redacted]

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25X1 [redacted] the military organization will present only one candidate.]

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[Ky told newsmen again yesterday that he would not enter the race, but all official estimates point to the contrary. According to the latest US Embassy assessment, Ky's chances for the nomination appear slightly better than Thieu's for the moment. The embassy's judgment is based on a series of conversations with knowledgeable Constituent Assembly delegates and influential political leaders, who unanimously viewed the showdown in the assembly which set the presidential minimum age limit at 35 as a victory for Ky. Assemblymen supporting Thieu had been reported confident of establishing the minimum age at 40, in hopes of disqualifying the 37-year-old Ky.]

[Thieu, in the meantime, is acting more like a candidate in spite of his silence on the subject, according to his supporters. He is said to be carefully selecting representatives from the major blocs of political power to provide him civilian support and eventually to establish a national political front. Such a hand-picked front would then hold a convention and nominate the person approved by the Directorate as the candidate.]

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[Thieu is also pressing key assemblymen behind the scenes for a constitutionally based supreme armed forces council with specific powers. Thieu apparently believes that if he did not run for the presidency, his authority as head of the council would afford the military establishment, and himself, an influential voice in the new government.]

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: On 21 February a company of the US 4th Infantry Division participating in Operation SAM HOUSTON 40 miles southwest of Kontum City was attacked by an estimated battalion-sized enemy force employing mortars and heavy automatic weapons. Artillery and tactical air strikes supported the US troops, and after three hours the enemy withdrew. Six hours later the Communists again attacked the company. Official casualty figures for US forces are six killed and 62 wounded. Enemy losses are unknown.

Operation JUNCTION CITY, a 23-battalion US operation which began on 22 February, has encountered only light enemy resistance thus far. JUNCTION CITY is the third major US operation conducted in War Zone "C" in Tay Ninh Province. It is designed to seek out and destroy major Communist forces and headquarters in that region--including the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the Viet Cong's military and political command center. More than 7,000 enemy troops, including the 271st and 272nd Viet Cong regiments and the 101st North Vietnamese Army regiment, are believed to be in the area.

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India: Early election returns indicate that the ruling Congress Party, although suffering serious setbacks in many parts of the country, will retain power at the national level and in most of India's state governments.

In the south Indian state of Kerala, an electoral front led by the Peking-oriented Communist Party, has been swept to power with an even greater majority than had been anticipated. Right-wing, nationalist parties have made significant gains at the expense of the Congress Party in some areas of north India, running particularly strong in New Delhi itself.

Congress Party President Kamaraj failed to win a seat in the Madras State Assembly, and unofficial returns indicate that several other powerful leaders of the party are in danger of defeat. Some cabinet members also have lost their races or are trailing their opponents. Prime Minister Gandhi, however, handily won her contest for a parliamentary seat, and this will be a factor in her favor in any postelection attempt by members of the party to remove her from office.

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*Jamaica: The moderate Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) continues in power with an increased parliamentary majority following Tuesday's general elections.

Unofficial returns indicate that the JLP won 33 of the 53 seats in the newly enlarged House of Representatives, with the remaining 20 going to the opposition Peoples' National Party (PNP). The popular vote was close, however. A preliminary count estimates that the JLP polled some 50 percent of the vote to over 49 percent for the PNP.

All JLP cabinet officers running for re-election were returned to parliament, and the party showed surprising strength in the Kingston urban area. In the opposition camp, several prominent PNP leftists were defeated, but party leader Norman Manley scoffed at suggestions to modify the socialist stance of the PNP in order to win the next elections. Manley charged that 250,000 people had been disenfranchised through inefficient registration procedures, and that the voting did not reflect the true will of the people.

Acting Prime Minister Donald Sangster, who campaigned on the island's economic growth under the JLP, will lead the new government. Sangster is regarded as an able administrator, although he lacks the decisiveness and broad appeal of former Prime Minister Alexander Bustamante.

Most of Jamaica was peaceful as voters cast their ballots. In volatile West Kingston, however, several disturbances occurred despite virtual occupation by police and military forces.

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